

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 060930Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3174

S E C R E T CAIRO 6137

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SWEL EG

SUBJ: POSSIBLE EPIDEMIC (C)

REF: STATE 108561

1. APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S PROMPT RESPONSE. EMBASSY CONTACTED DR. FRASER AND AMBASSADOR MET WITH HIM AND DR. MINOR MAY 5 FOR FULL DISCUSSION OF PROBLEM. DR. FRASER BRIEFED AMBASSADOR ON FOUR TOPICS PARA 3 REFTEL AND PROVIDED HIM WITH USEFUL BACKGROUND IN THIS MATTER. OBVIOUS PROBLEM IS THAT EMBASSY/NAMRU THUS FAR HAVE ONLY VERY LIMITED INFORMATION CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF OUTBREAK AND THEREFORE NEEDS ADDITIONAL MORE SOLID INFORMATION.

2. AMBASSADOR TOLD DR. FRASER THAT IF OUTBREAK CONFIRMED HIS PRINCIPAL CONCERNS WERE: FIRST, USG PERSONNEL AND DEPENDENTS; SECOND, OTHER MEMBERS OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY; AND THIRD, PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE TO EGYPT IF GOE SHOULD ASK FOR OUR HELP. AMBASSADOR SAID GOE WOULD BE SENSITIVE TO ANY PUBLICITY CONCERNING OUTBREAK BECAUSE OF EFFECT ON ITS RELATIONS WITH OTHER STATES IN AREA AND ON TOURISM AND BECAUSE THE SUPERSTITIOUS NATURE OF EGYPTIANS AND OTHER ARABS WOULD LEAD MAY TO CONCLUDE THAT OUTBREAK WAS AN "ACT OF GOD" PRODUCED BY SADAT'S ACTIONS, INCLUDING HIS OPENING OF THE SUEZ

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CANAL.

3. IT WAS AGREED THAT UNTIL MINHEALTH RETURN NEXT WEEK FROM WHO CONFERENCE IN GENEVA, DR. MINOR WOULD CONTINUE TO DISCREETLY ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP FURTHER INFORMATION, USING THE SOURCE OF HIS FIRST REPORT TO SEE WHETHER THAT SOURCE COULD PROVIDE MORE DETAILS OR WHETHER HE IS ABLE TO CONFIRM THAT NO FURTHER CASES HAVE DEVELOPED. DR. MINOR WILL ALSO DISCREETLY APPROACH THE CANDIAN MEDICAL TEAM WITH UNEF, ISMAILIA, WITH WHOM HE HAS CLOSE WORKING RELATIONS, TO FIND OUT WHETHER IT HAS RECEIVED ANY SIMILAR REPORTS. DR. FRASER EXPLAINED THAT INFORMATION WAS NEEDED CONCERNING NUMBER OF CASES, THE TIME SPAN BETWEEN CASES, THE RATE AND AREA OF SPREAD, THE KIND OF DISEASE, (BUBONIC OR PNEUMONIC) AND DETAILS CONCERNING VECTORS, SUCH AS ANY SUDEN DIE-OFF OF RATS.

4. DEPENDING ON WHAT FURTHER INFORMATION IS DEVELOPED AMBASSADOR WILL THEN DECIDE WHETHER TO APPROACH MINHEALTH DIRECTLY WITHOUT REVEALING SOURCE OF OUR INFORMATION AND MAKE LOW-KEY INQUIRY ON SUBJECT. DEPENDING ON RESPONSE WE COULD THEN DECIDE ON OFFERING ANY APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE.

5. EMBASSY APPRECIATES ASSURANCES IN PARA 4 REFTEL THAT CDC ASSISTANCE WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE PROMPTLY IF GOE REQUESTS IT. FOR THE MOMENT WE WILL WAIT TO SEE WHAT FURHTER INFORMATION CAN BE DEVELOPED.
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